United Nations S/PV.4308

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4308th meeting

Thursday, 5 April 2001, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Jeremy Greenstock	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahsan
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Cooney
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Gokool
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovksy
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Mejdoub
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in East Timor.

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01-32066 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council under the United Kingdom presidency this month, it gives me pleasure to follow the tradition of paying a very warm compliment to our predecessors for their excellent leadership of the Council during the month of March. I say "our predecessors" because we had two Presidents for the price of one during the course of March. We were very impressed by the seamless interchange between Ambassador Kuchynski and Ambassador Yel'chenko and by the sensitive and good-humoured handling of our intensive business during the month of March. I would like to express, on behalf of the whole Council, our warm gratitude to Ukraine for its presidency.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in East Timor

The President: Members of the Council are expecting me to handle this meeting in a relaxed manner. We are bringing into the open Chamber — to non-members of the Security Council, our partners in the United Nations — our style of informal consultations, because the Council wishes to increase the transparency of its business and to share more of it with non-members of the Council and the media when there is no reason of discretion or confidentiality for being in the other room. Members should therefore expect this meeting to be presided over in that relaxed manner.

At this meeting, in the absence of objection, we are extending an invitation under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

Before I ask Mr. Annabi to speak, may I remind Council members that we are not keeping a list of speakers. I shall call speakers as they apply to the President or the Secretariat, in the normal way of our informal consultations. I would like to have an interactive discussion. If participants raise questions, I may turn to Mr. Annabi to answer those questions as they come up, and not necessarily leave them to be answered at the end. I am glad, too, that non-members of the Council, in participating in this meeting, have been encouraged to pose any questions that they may have about East Timor through members of the Council. They may do that during the course of the discussion. If they have points that they would like to raise, they can ask a friendly member of the Council to raise those questions.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hédi Annabi for his briefing of the Council.

Mr. Annabi: I am pleased to brief the Council on the latest developments in East Timor, having recently returned from a visit there. On my previous visit to East Timor, in November 1999, I was struck by the enormity of the destruction and the task that lay ahead, both for the East Timorese and for the international community. Since then, enormous progress has been achieved, but there is, of course, still much that needs to be done.

In the two months that have elapsed since the adoption of resolution 1338 (2001), which extended the mandate of United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), there have been a number of significant developments, including the adoption of a regulation on the establishment of a Constituent Assembly and the modalities for its election, the setting of a date for the election, the establishment of the East Timor Defence Force and an increase in refugee returns. There have also been a certain number of unfortunate internal disturbances in East Timor. I will now cover these various developments in greater detail.

First, a major milestone in East Timor's path towards independence was passed on 13 March when the National Council endorsed a regulation on the election of the Constituent Assembly. In promulgating that regulation on 16 March, the Transitional Administrator, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, announced that the election for the 88-member constituent assembly would be held on 30 August 2001. Each district will elect one representative on a majority basis and 75 members will be elected on a proportional basis in a single nationwide constituency. The Assembly will be expected to draft and adopt the constitution of an

independent and democratic East Timor within a period of 90 days.

After a lively discussion, the National Council ultimately rejected — unfortunately, if I may say so — a proposal to impose mandatory quotas for women. However, a preamble was included in the regulation which encourages the equal participation of women in the electoral and constitutional process. The regulation also provides for the establishment of an independent electoral commission with exclusive electoral authority. The commission will be composed of a Chief Electoral Officer, who has already been designated. The Chief Electoral Officer will be Mr. Carlos Valenzuela, who is a respected expert and a veteran of United Nations elections. The commission will also include five voting commissioners, who will be appointed by the Secretary-General. Two of them will be East Timorese and three will be internationally recognized electoral experts.

Also on 16 March, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello promulgated a regulation on the establishment of the Central Civil Registry for East Timor. As a result, a nationwide drive to register East Timor's residents has now begun. I was able to observe personally the registration process in both Oecussi and Suai districts. The registration campaign will provide the basis for the preparation of the electoral roll. To be eligible to vote, refugees in the camps in West Timor who wish to cast their ballot in this election will have to register before 24 June, when the registration process will be completed, and they will have to be present in East Timor on polling day. I should emphasize that the schedule for the election is rather tight and that it can be kept only if the electoral registration process can be completed as foreseen by 24 June.

We will be able to speak of a date for independence only once the constituent assembly has begun its work. There is a broad range of views among the East Timorese regarding the possible structure of the future State. It is expected that those views will crystallize as the Timorese prepare for the actual drafting of the constitution to be adopted by the constituent assembly.

On 27 March, the National Council narrowly rejected a draft regulation that provided for the establishment of commissions to undertake a broad process of consultation on the future constitution. Following that decision, Mr. Xanana Gusmão, citing his disquiet with the proceedings of the National Council, decided to resign from the Council. Mr. José Ramos-Horta has been appointed by Mr. Vieira de Mello as a Council member in Mr. Gusmão's place and has consequently resigned from the Cabinet, where he was the Minister for Foreign Affairs. As members of the Security Council are aware, members of the National Council cannot be Cabinet members. The National Council is expected to elect a new Speaker next week.

In view of the National Council's decision, Mr. Vieira de Mello, with the support of the Cabinet, has decided to support initiatives by non-governmental organizations to engage the people of East Timor and to hear their views all across the territory as to how their nation's founding charter should be framed. District commissions will be established to complement the process and the work of the constituent assembly.

I would like now to turn to the East Timor Defence Force (ETDF). A ceremony was held in Aileu on 1 February to mark the disbanding of the former fighters of the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (FALINTIL) and the establishment of the ETDF. As we had previously reported to the Council, the new Force will consist of a light infantry force of 1,500 regular soldiers and 1,500 reservists. Recruitment will take place over a period of three years and an Office of Defence Force Development has been established within the Transitional Administration to oversee and coordinate all activities related to the development of the Force, as well as bilateral and multilateral relations.

The former Commander of FALINTIL, General Taur Matan Ruak, has been appointed by Mr. Vieira de Mello as Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force and 650 former FALINTIL members have been selected to form the first battalion. The training of the first 250 of these 650 officers began on 19 February, with the assistance of Portuguese instructors. Australia has agreed to construct a permanent training centre, which will be located at Metinaro, a city in Dili district on the coast to the east of Dili. Australia has also loaned rifles for the training of the Force. Work on this training centre has begun — in fact, it began this week. However, additional resources are required, particularly weapons and training equipment, to pursue this training.

Some 1,100 former FALINTIL fighters who were not selected to join the Defence Force are returning to civilian life with the assistance of a programme established in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and which is financed by the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development. The former combatants participate in retraining and education programmes that prepare them for civilian life. They also receive short-term cash payments to help their resettlement.

Turning now to the situation of refugees in West Timor, I would like to say that another positive development among recent developments has been the recent increase in the number of refugees returning to East Timor. To date, over 180,000 refugees have returned, but it is estimated that up 100,000 — according to some estimates — remain in West Timor. We continue to receive reports that East Timorese refugees are subject to intimidation and that they lack access to information on the real conditions inside East Timor. The International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNTAET, with the cooperation of the Indonesian task force on refugees, have recently undertaken three rounds of organized repatriations. To encourage reconciliation among the East Timorese and further refugee returns, UNTAET also facilitated the visit of a group of five former pro-autonomy East Timorese leaders to East Timor from 28 to 30 March.

Early last month, on 6 March, the Secretary-General met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Shihab to discuss the situation of the refugees in West Timor. Minister Shihab proposed that a security assessment proceed to the area with a view to downgrading the current phase V security level, which would enable the return of United Nations agencies. The Secretary-General expressed the Security Coordinator's concern over the likely negative outcome of a security assessment in West Timor at this time, but undertook to keep the matter under review.

As regards the security and law and order situation, until recent weeks the border with West Timor had been relatively quiet. However, over the past several days this situation has changed, and multiple incidents have occurred. On 1 April, UNTAET troops observed two suspected militia members approaching a junction point with West Timor, west of Maliana in Bobonaro district. When one of them pointed his weapon in the direction of the border post and ignored a warning from UNTAET, UNTAET troops fired three shots at them. No injuries were reported.

On the same day, an UNTAET platoon at a junction point with West Timor, southwest of Tilomar in Covalima district, was fired at and returned fire. The Indonesian armed forces in the area attributed the firing to an accidental weapon discharge. These incidents are being investigated. UNTAET reports that cross-border smuggling activities, including by militia, are continuing, which makes it difficult sometimes to determine the underlying causes of these recent incidents.

There have been two more incidents over the past two or three days. On 2 and 3 April incidents occurred along the border again, including a shooting incident on 3 April that resulted in the death of a young woman. Today, Fijian soldiers who are part of the New Zealand contingent were fired upon at the southern end of the border between East and West Timor.

Inside East Timor itself the overall crime rate remains low, but nonetheless a number of serious incidents occurred last month. This is a cause for some concern in UNTAET. On 7 March members of the CPD-RDTL, the so-called Popular Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, disrupted a student meeting in central Dili, at which Xanana Gusmão was present. On the same day a series of violent incidents occurred in Bacau district, which resulted in the burning of the local mosque and an attack on the East Timorese district administrator and other United Nations staff, as well as the burning of their vehicle. Among the crowd were members of the CPD-RDTL, as well as former members of FALINTIL. On 12 March, in another incident in Viqueque, a fight between youth groups and a subsequent riot resulted in two deaths, the burning of almost 40 houses and the displacement of some 600 people. On 17 March a group of youths attacked two villages in Dili district, and during sporadic unrest over the following two days a civilian police patrol was fired upon.

An investigation has determined that the incident in Viqueque sprang from a quarrel between students at a secondary school, each belonging to a martial arts group — these martial arts groups, by the way, are quite popular in East Timor. Until this incident in Viqueque, the district had been largely quiet. However, in the case of the Bacau incident it is evident that individuals with political affiliations sought to take

advantage of discontent, which is especially prevalent among the unemployed youth.

Community meetings have been held in the affected districts. Among the lessons learned from these incidents are the importance of the role of the local communities in maintaining order and the need to build confidence with these communities, while making it clear at the same time that violence will not be tolerated. Clearly, stable employment opportunities will also be key to reducing the risk of violence.

When he briefed the Council last January, Mr. Vieira de Mello suggested that the effectiveness of civilian police in general in complex operations could be enhanced. Accordingly, the civilian police in Bacau district have undertaken a trial deployment along the lines followed for peacekeeping troops, which means a deployment by national contingents. In this case the Filipino national contingent will operate alone in the Bacau district. As I said, this is a test that will be carefully assessed before we consider extending it to other districts.

During my visit to East Timor I was impressed by the progress made in the establishment of the Timor Lorosae Police Service. Some 450 East Timorese police who have graduated from the police college are currently deployed throughout the country with the UNTAET police. Their relations with the local communities have greatly facilitated more effective policing. From now on, 100 new officers per month will graduate from the academy, which is double the previous rate. The full strength of 3,000 Timorese civilian police is expected to be achieved by April 2003. The process of "Timorization" has also started in the leadership of the local police, where an experienced East Timorese police officer has been appointed as director of the police college.

At the same time, as we have learned in other theatres — especially in Kosovo — progress with policing can be effective and sustainable only if there is a commensurate development of the day-to-day functioning of the judiciary and penal system. Since January three trials related to serious crimes have resulted in convictions. The rate at which the Special Panel for Serious Crimes can bring cases to trial is severely hampered by a lack of personnel, but in particular by a lack of qualified translators. Similar delays have been caused by the lack of funding to meet the expenses of witnesses.

Before concluding I would like to say a few words about the planning process for the follow-up on the United Nations peacekeeping presence in East Timor. The success of East Timor as a nation will depend in part on its capacity to acquire at every level the practical skills needed to run a State and to provide essential public services. This work has begun, but we need to continue well after independence with the objective of transferring the necessary skills to the East Timorese and phasing out the international personnel now serving in the administration.

However, we must be realistic and acknowledge that this process will take time. To give just one example, until recently the Royal Australian Air Force was running Dili Airport, but then this task was handing over to a civilian company. In the absence of the requisite East Timorese capacity, the Government of Portugal has assumed this task and will meet the estimated cost of $4.2 million for running the airport and training East Timorese to take over some of the functions in due course.

Mr. Vieira de Mello has established a working group on post-UNTAET planning. The working group has begun its work in East Timor to develop recommendations on the specific estimated level of international staffing and technical assistance that will be required to support the Government of East Timor after independence. The group will also determine strategies for training and the duration for which those positions are considered necessary. The working group will consult closely with the East Timor leadership and other development partners, including the international financial institutions.

Here at Headquarters we are considering ways to support this work. In this connection, we are exploring the possibility of setting up a mission task force to draw up specific recommendations on the complete international presence in East Timor after independence. As we have said previously, there will be a need for troops, for a meaningful military component, for a civilian police component, and for a civilian component.

Overall, my visit has reinforced my impression that significant progress is being made on most, if not all, fronts to prepare the East Timorese for independence. Subject to the continuing assistance of the international community, the East Timorese should be able to realize their aspirations for a democratic and

sustainable State. Morale in UNTAET is generally good, and United Nations and East Timorese staff take pride in what they do in this historic challenge that they are engaged in.

Finally, I would like to appeal to members of the Council for their continued support to ensure that the population of East Timor can build upon the investment made by the international community to date.

The President: I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his extremely useful report and for taking the trouble to visit East Timor and report back to us so soon. It is a very important subject on the Council's agenda.

We have started a speakers' list. I shall turn to members of the Council in a second. The Council should remember that, to some extent, this is an interim briefing. We are expecting a report of the Secretary-General towards the end of this month. There will be, I expect, a major debate on East Timor in early May. Subject to the decision of the Council at that time, I would expect that meeting to be open to the participation of non-members of the Council.

I will now give the floor to members of the Council who wish to speak. If Mr. Annabi wishes later to come back in and interact and respond to other people's interventions, there will be an opportunity for him to do that.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): My delegation would like to thank the Secretariat for its most useful briefing on the situation in East Timor.

For many years, Norway has attached great interest to East Timor, both at the political level and within Norwegian civil society. Norway is now in the process of planning our long-term engagement in East Timor. As part of that process, and as a manifestation of the close relationship between Norway and East Timor, Norway's Minister of International Development paid a visit to East Timor last month. During her visit, the Minister discussed with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the East Timorese leadership how Norway could best contribute during the period leading up to independence and how we could assist in dealing with the many challenges the new country will face following its independence.

In line with the contents of those talks, we have adopted a long-term development perspective in our East Timor policy. We will contribute to ensuring that the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, among others, are given sufficient resources to fulfil their mandatory tasks within the transitional period. Subsequently, we are committed to support the continued presence of the agents of those agencies following East Timorese independence. During the Minister's recent visit, she announced a pledge of $1 million to the World Bank Trust Fund for East Timor. That grant has already been disbursed.

To support a vulnerable peace agreement in a post-conflict area like East Timor, a comprehensive peace-building strategy is indeed required. In line with that, we would stress the need for an integrated approach with regard to political and development planning. The development agencies should work closely with UNTAET during the remaining part of its mandatory period. Subsequently, the agencies should be given a central role in the United Nations presence following independence.

For its part, Norway is encouraged by the active engagement among the East Timorese population to achieve independence by the end of 2001. It is therefore important that we, the Member nations support the work done by UNTAET so that it can fulfil its mandate by the end of this year. In that regard, Norway would like to underline the importance of Timorese participation in the Transitional Administration. We welcome the further progress in delegation of authority to the East Timorese leadership.

Moreover, Norway welcomes the achievements with regard to criminal proceedings in the wake of the serious crimes committed in 1999, and reiterates the crucial impact that such proceedings have on permanent peace and reconciliation in the area. In that regard, we would also welcome any further steps to strengthen the judicial system and the rule of law as a fundamental principle of governance in the future State of East Timor.

A question of particular interest in that regard is the election to be held on 30 August 2001. Norway recently discussed with UNTAET and the East Timorese leadership the issue of regulations pertaining to the election of a constituent assembly, focusing in particular on the participation of women in political parties and throughout all stages of the electoral and

constitutional process. It is our hope that the preambular paragraph in the regulation encouraging the equal participation of women and men will have the intended impact.

We would also like to underline the importance of the elections being free and fair. It is crucial that East Timorese citizens living in Indonesia — especially those in refugee camps in West Timor — are enabled to exercise their right to vote. We therefore remain deeply concerned about the slow progress in obtaining a durable solution to the issue of refugees. It is of crucial importance that all refugees wanting to participate in the forthcoming elections are enabled to repatriate under conditions of safety and dignity before the closing date for civil registration, set for 20 June 2001. In line with that, Norway continues to be seriously concerned about the security situation on the border with Indonesia and within the refugee camps in West Timor. We therefore again urge the Indonesian Government to take the necessary steps to fulfil Security Council resolution 1319 (2000).

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of UNTAET's mandate, and his recommendations pertaining to a continued international presence in East Timor, are due this spring. Norway looks forward to receiving that report and to participating in the subsequent debates, the outcome of which will be instrumental for the success of the peace-building operation in East Timor.

Let me conclude by paying tribute to UNTAET, and especially to Sergio Vieira de Mello for undertaking this most difficult task.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I think there was a considerable amount of good and optimistic news in Mr. Annabi's briefing. I, too, am grateful to him for reporting to us so early after his trip to give us a first-hand impression. There are a couple of points I want to flag and a couple of questions I want to ask.

We strongly support the electoral timetable. We think it is essential that it be held to even though the schedule is very tight. I was glad to hear Mr. Annabi's comments on that. There are a lot of things that need to be done between now and the end of the year, but it is fundamental, in our view, that that process be worked through.

I was also glad to hear that the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) is already taking care to ensure that the views of ordinary citizens can be fed into the process, looking towards the constituent assembly and beyond. We are encouraged by that, and we urge them to continue. This is also, in our view, an important element of this process.

We are very concerned about the security situation both within East Timor and along the border. The recent civil disturbances are of concern. Nothing challenges East Timor's chances for a peaceful future more than unrest from within. The emergence of intolerance as a factor in that, if it continues, will, I am sure, in the end cost East Timor international support and aid. We hope that the authorities and UNTAET can cooperate in bringing that under control.

We are also very concerned about the recent incidents of violence along the border. We welcome and support the robust support of UNTAET peacekeepers, and in that regard also believe that Indonesia should do more on its side of the border, in keeping with resolution 1319 (2000).

We are also not satisfied with the handling of the suspects in the murder of the three workers from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We encourage Indonesia to show greater commitment to accountability and other elements of resolution 1319 (2000).

I wanted to ask a question in that connection. We understand that a former militia member named Jacobus Bere, whose name has been linked to the killing of a New Zealand peacekeeper, is currently in Indonesian custody. I am wondering what steps the United Nations is taking in that case.

I also wanted to ask Mr. Annabi: we have been approached by a number of international non-governmental organizations expressing concerns that we consider legitimate about current UNTAET tax regulations, which are disadvantaging them. I would be interested in Mr. Annabi's comments on that problem and on how it might be solved.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on developments and progress in East Timor.

Today's meeting looks to the future of East Timor. The announcement of the date of East Timor's first democratic elections — 30 August 2001 — was a very important step in a process that has been under way for more than a year. More than ever before, that process needs full support from the leadership of all parties. On 13 March the East Timor National Council agreed to elections to the constituent assembly that will be responsible for formulating and adopting the national constitution. The National Council should take into consideration the aspirations of all segments of the East Timor population in order to reflect the political will of all citizens.

The violence that occurred in two districts at the beginning of this month shows that the security situation remains fragile. We believe that violence must stop so that East Timor can prepare calmly for a new and important phase in its history, while the stability of the entire region is maintained.

I have a question for Mr. Annabi about the situation in East Timor. What steps has the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) taken during this sensitive stage in the domestic situation, when political parties and movements are becoming increasingly active? The incidents of violence that Mr. Annabi mentioned are cause for concern. Could the resignation of Xanana Gusmão complicate the domestic political situation? What steps have been taken in that regard?

Particular attention should be focused on ethnic and religious tension, which could fuel the destabilization not only of East Timor but also of areas outside the country. We consider that everything must be done to keep the question of East Timor in its proper context and to manage the situation in line with the plan established by UNTAET pursuant to its Security Council mandate.

The Indonesian authorities have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to cooperate with UNTAET, and they have set up mechanisms for dialogue and for working together to resolve outstanding issues and to move towards the establishment of confidence-building measures.

We believe that the Security Council must take account of the Indonesian Government's appeal to send a team to evaluate the security situation in East Timor, with a view to changing the region's security status. Action along those lines could restore and consolidate trust between the two neighbours and could promote resumed reconciliation among East Timorese, something that is of crucial importance for the future of East Timor and of the region as a whole. The return of humanitarian agencies to West Timor will certainly help calm the refugee population, and will encourage their return to East Timor.

I wish finally to say that we encourage UNTAET's efforts and those of troop-contributing countries and of donors, who are playing an important role in helping to stabilize the country as it embarks on a new stage in its history. It is important to continue to provide the necessary support to East Timor to ensure that this endeavour meets with success.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): First of all, Sir, I want to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. Please be assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation. I want also to thank you for the kind words addressed to my delegation expressing high appreciation of Ukraine's presidency last month.

I would like also to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Annabi for his very informative briefing on the latest developments in East Timor. In fact, his information provides some hope.

We congratulate Mr. José Ramos-Horta on his appointment as President of East Timor's National Council, and we wish him every success. We hope also that Mr. Xanana Gusmão will continue to play an active part in the political life of the territory.

We are encouraged by the information on the security and order situation. We think that an important step towards the independence and self-rule of the territory is the establishment of a local police service and of an effective justice system, as well as of an East Timorese defence force. In that regard, we are pleased to note that just in the one year of the East Timor police service's activities, 450 police officers have been graduated. They have already been deployed throughout the territory. Two hundred cadets are currently undergoing training at the police college. We are encouraged by the information that a Defence Force has been established. We heard too that this month will see the beginning of construction of a new East Timor Defence Force training centre at Metinaro.

We are of the opinion that the successful conduct of democratic and transparent elections should be one of UNTAET's priorities. In this regard, we welcome the setting of a specific date for the first East Timorese free elections on the basis of a recently approved electoral law, which is among the most open and democratic in the world. With the establishment of an Independent Electoral Commission, the electoral process has really started, and Mr. Annabi has in fact informed us that the election campaign is in full swing. It is essentially important now to make all political parties become part of this process and to involve the population in it.

Another important issue is, of course, the smooth return and resettlement of refugees. This is yet another important condition for the successful creation of civil society and reconciliation in East Timor. We are pleased to know that as of today 180,000 refugees have returned. This is a very encouraging fact. In this regard, we believe that the development of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with Indonesia is extremely important to the territory. In this respect, we are glad to note the efforts of the Special Representative, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, to advance the reconciliation process, and in particular his meeting with pro-autonomy East Timorese leaders in Dili on 28 March of this year.

It is extremely important, in our view, to put an end to the presence and the activities of militias at refugee camps in West Timor and to resume there the activities of the international humanitarian agencies. We welcome, in this respect, the readiness of the Government of Indonesia to accept the United Nations mission of experts for assessment of the security situation in West Timor, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Secretary-General's report of 16 January 2001. I also recall that this request was also put forward in the statement by Mr. Ramos Horta during our previous meeting on this agenda item. In this connection, we hope that the Secretariat is preparing to send the mission at the earliest possible time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Special Representative, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and the United Nations staff for their efforts. I want to assure them of Ukraine's readiness to continue its full support of UNTAET efforts in building an independent East Timor and in the implementation of its people's aspirations.

Finally, I have one question for Mr. Annabi. In view of the information on the latest disturbances within East Timor, what would Mr. Annabi's explanation be? In fact, what is behind the latest disturbances in East Timor? It seems that it is not only competition between fighters or sportsmen. It seems that there is a trend, and maybe an evaluation can be made by the Secretariat.

The President: I congratulate those speakers who have intervened so far on keeping their comments to five minutes.

I turn now to Mr. Annabi to take up the questions so far, after which I will turn to Ambassador Ward of Jamaica.

Mr. Annabi: I think the first question relates to Jacobus Bere, who is a former member of the Laksaur militia group and is suspected of having been responsible for the killing of Private Manning of the New Zealand contingent last July. Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello has written to the Indonesian authorities requesting his extradition, or at least his transfer, to East Timor so that he can be prosecuted. He has done that under a memorandum of understanding that was signed between the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the Indonesian authorities last April. We understand from statements made in Jakarta by Indonesian officials that they will not be prepared to respond positively to this request. They have pointed out that this person is in detention and is still undergoing trial in West Timor, and that for that reason they will not be able to respond positively, at least at this stage.

Turning now to the issue of the tax regulations that are considered to be a bit of a problem by some of the non-governmental organizations on the ground, I would like to point out that under the regulations that are in place in East Timor, promulgated by the Transitional Administrator, non-governmental organizations are not subject to income tax unless they make a profit. They are entitled to import goods free of taxes for educational purposes, health purposes and other humanitarian endeavours. This allows the vast majority of them to operate free of any taxes on their activities. Some of them employ local personnel, and when they do, they have an obligation to withhold tax on behalf of their employees. My understanding is that they generally do not object to the withholding of taxes from their local staff. It is the withholding of taxes

from the international staff of non-governmental organizations that seems to be the problem.

UNTAET and the East Timor Transitional Administration are very aware of this problem, and a working group has been established, which includes representatives of both non-governmental organizations and the East Timor Transitional Administration officials. This working group is going to try to prepare what are normally called country agreements; in other words, a draft of the kind of agreement that is normally signed between a non-governmental organization and the local government. This group has been meeting on a weekly basis and is expected to report to the Cabinet soon, where, hopefully, a draft agreement regulating these issues can be worked out and adopted. This is an issue that is under active consideration. I would like to add one point, however, that has been made to us by Mr. Vieira de Mello. While he will of course do what he can to ensure that this process is successful and reaches a positive conclusion, he will not want to go against the wishes of the East Timorese who now form a majority of the Cabinet. But hopefully a draft agreement will be worked out that will regulate the conditions under which non-governmental organizations can function, and their obligations and privileges in East Timor.

The last two questions related to the recent incidents and the reasons behind them, and to the possible implications of Xanana Gusmão's resignation from the National Council. As I indicated in my briefing, some of these incidents were created by groups of youths with no political motivation. I have to say that the Timorese are prone to getting excited rather quickly when there is an incident — it can quickly turn into a mob scene. Some of these incidents — probably all of them, in fact — have evolved in that way. But some do not have any political motivation. Others were probably provoked, aided or encouraged by people who had some political motivation — that was the case with one of them. In this pre-electoral period, when 14 different political parties have been formed, some may be — and probably are — trying to take advantage of the disillusionment that is prevalent among unemployed people to derive political gains from some of these situations.

Of course, both the police and military components of UNTAET have been trying to draw lessons from these incidents. To be quite frank, I think that if we had had better information on the situation in some of these communities, and better knowledge of these communities — which are not always very easy to penetrate when we do not speak the language or know the culture — we could perhaps have avoided some of the violence or been able to keep it under better control. But UNTAET and the East Timor Transitional Administration are looking at what additional measures can be taken, including increased patrolling and showing a stronger presence to try to prevent incidents rather than having to react to them. We are also sending experts from New York, both military and civilian, to discuss the best way of approaching possible situations of civil unrest in the run-up to the elections, and I am confident that the necessary measures will be taken.

As regards the resignation of Xanana Gusmão, I was discussing the matter this morning with Sergio Vieira de Mello. He feels strongly that this should not be dramatized. Apart from the immediate reason for his resignation, which was his disappointment at the fact that the National Council failed to adopt the regulation on the creation of constitutional commissions to try to discuss the future draft constitution, he feels that there are too many demands on his time right now and that he needs some distance. The possibility cannot be excluded that he is somewhat unhappy with the current differences of opinion that are being voiced by the different political parties and that he sees a trend which is not good. I think that this is probably also a way, on his part, to try to send a message that the Timorese should avoid such differences, or at least discuss them in a more constructive spirit, both inside the National Council and in the streets.

Incidentally, the National Council is a very dynamic and sometimes difficult body — I experienced that myself when I met with it. I received some compliments about UNTAET's work, but had to face a barrage of criticism by some of its most active members, who — again, probably for political reasons — are critical of UNTAET and consider that we have not done enough for the Timorese, especially in reactivating and reinvigorating the economy.

I think that a lot of progress has been made, as can be seen when we measure the difference between the situation in November 1999, when I was last there, and now, and that can be seen not only in Dili but in Suai. When I visited Suai in November 1999, there was not a roof on a single house in that city. Today, I think I

can say that probably about three quarters of the roofs are back in place. It can be seen in the market place that activities are picking up and things are better. But obviously, some of the Timorese would have liked us to be able to do more for them, as is understandable; and some of them will possibly exploit this for political purposes.

The President: I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for adding that useful detail.

On the tax problem for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it is not the Council's business, but it would be of concern to the Security Council if NGOs were deterred from wanting to work in East Timor because the regulations there were less advantageous than in other parts of the world where they work. I hope that the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the Special Representative will try to resolve that problem as amicably as possible. Please convey that to UNTAET.

Mr. Ward (Jamaica): My delegation welcomes your presidency, Sir, and your stated commitment and efforts to bring further transparency to the Security Council. You have Jamaica's full cooperation.

I thank Mr. Annabi for his briefing. As Jamaica's core positions on East Timor have already been stated in this Chamber on a number of occasions, I will take this opportunity to pose a few questions to Mr. Annabi.

We recognize the importance of maintaining a credible security presence in the West Timor refugee camp. We are also very concerned that the refugees continue to live under extremely dire humanitarian conditions; there are reports of refugees on the verge of starvation. We also understand that, while making significant efforts to deal with the situation, the Indonesian Government lacks the necessary resources to deal adequately with the refugee problem. In view of the recent incidents of security breaches reported by Mr. Annabi, can we expect the security assessment team to reclassify the security situation so as to allow for the return of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and if so, when?

Secondly, has any progress been made on the question of property rights in order to facilitate the return of refugees to East Timor?

Thirdly, we are of the view that the East Timorese political leadership must be fully consulted with regard to the role of the United Nations in the period immediately following the achievement of independence by East Timor. We would like to know whether the East Timorese have given any indication of the specific areas in which they would need assistance, in particular, areas of security and of capacity-building in their judicial system and law enforcement. In that context, is the Secretariat engaged in preparing an exit strategy for the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), and if so, when might it be presented to the Council?

Finally, what efforts, if any, are being made to encourage the return of East Timorese of the diaspora to assist with the building of an independent East Timor?

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are very grateful to Mr. Annabi for his briefing to us today. In this connection, we wish to refer to two topics and to formulate some very concrete questions at the end. I wish to refer first to the situation of refugees in West Timor and later to the electoral process.

With regard to the refugees, we have taken note of the new programme for refugee return, in which the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration are participating. The return of 600 refugees began in early March from the camps of Tuapukan, Noelbaki and Naibonat. The number of refugees who returned in March amounts to more than 2,600, which is excellent news.

We are concerned, however, by the situation of refugees in the other camps that United Nations agencies have not revisited since last September, where, according to the press, refugees are dying of hunger and disease. In this regard, I wish to echo a remark made by Ambassador Ward. We are aware of the security risks, but the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator should undertake a speedy inspection to determine whether conditions are right for a change of security rating from phase V, thus enabling United Nations agencies to return promptly to the refugee camps.

As to the electoral process, we have taken note of the decision adopted by the National Council of East Timor and approved by UNTAET to convene elections

to choose members of the constituent assembly on 30 August, with the aim of promulgating the new constitution in December this year — a process we fully support, of course.

In the open debate held in late January, we noted our concern about the political violence referred to in the Secretary-General's report. We were saddened to hear from Mr. Annabi about the incidents that occurred in Viqueque in early March, as well as the deliberate fire set in a Baucau mosque. We take note of the establishment of a Truth, Reception and Reconciliation Commission and hope that it will achieve its goal. East Timor is a country in gestation, a new country for which the international community has great expectations. It would be very sad if the rebirth of the Timorese people were marred by political violence and religious intransigence.

I turn now to my questions. We have had a very productive exchange of views with the delegation of Brazil, a country friendly to Colombia. Following the process that you, Sir, have suggested, I have several specific questions to put to Mr. Annabi on its behalf.

First, is there currently any mechanism periodically to assess the security situation in the field? How does the Secretariat envisage the transition to independence from the perspective of the level of peacekeeping forces that will be required?

Secondly, concerning the maintenance of law and order, we have heard Mr. Annabi's descriptions of the efforts to prevent incidents such as those that occurred in Baucau and Viqueque last month. It is particularly important to find out who is behind these acts of violence and to identify the causes of tension in order to determine in all cases whether these are instances of political manipulation or rather of spontaneous outbreaks, such as those referred to, produced perhaps by frustration and impatience.

Thirdly, according to press reports that have been widely distributed, in the course of a heated debate the majority of the members of the National Council claimed that they had not been appropriately informed about the resignation of Xanana Gusmão and therefore voted to postpone the debate on his replacement to the following Monday. Mr. Annabi's reference to this topic allayed many of our doubts, but I would ask whether, on the basis of what he said, we should understand that the recent political developments in East Timor will have no impact on the implementation of the transition schedule.

Finally, it would be useful for Mr. Annabi to tell us more about the type of international assistance required to prepare the forthcoming elections of the constituent assembly. In addition to international observers, what other type of help is now required?

The President: I might just give a pointer to the Assistant Secretary-General. When he comes to answer some of these questions, he will need to consider them also, perhaps, against the Secretary-General's report expected at the end of the month. If he can answer quite briefly some of the points that have been raised, the Council, I think, will expect some of the points raised in this discussion to feed into the preparation of the Secretary-General's report. Some of the questions raised can be answered at greater length then. At the end of this meeting, I will be giving some summing-up pointers for the Council's interest in that forthcoming report.

Mr. Cooney (Ireland): Let me first welcome you, Sir, to the chair and wish the United Kingdom well for its presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to endorse your decision to bring this kind of briefing into open session.

I would like now to thank Mr. Annabi for his most informative briefing today, which was enlivened by his reflections on his own recent visit to East Timor. Given that we had the opportunity in January to put our position on the record — and, as has been mentioned, we will be having substantial debates on East Timor next month and probably in July — I will limit myself to a few matters of particular importance.

First, we welcome the recent progress towards the eventual preparation of a constitution and the holding of democratic elections. We have taken careful note of the information provided recently about the financial and personnel needs for the elections and are examining the specific requests closely in the context of our ongoing bilateral assistance programme for East Timor.

Secondly, we welcome the development of the judicial system in East Timor and the first measures taken against those accused of serious crimes committed in 1999, as well as the establishment of a Truth, Reception and Reconciliation Commission. The initial steps taken by the Government of Indonesia to

investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are welcome and should be continued.

Thirdly, Ireland remains concerned about the refugee situation in West Timor. While the recent operations organized by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration are positive, the approximately 100,000 refugees remaining in camps must be able to return to East Timor before 20 June 2001, in time to register for the elections there. We would echo the views expressed by Jamaica and Colombia in this regard. Action must also be taken to address the situation of East Timorese women who were abducted during the conflict, some of whom are allegedly still being held and subjected to abuse in West Timor. We would be grateful for further information regarding this issue.

Fourthly, the overall security situation continues to give cause for concern. The recent incidents in Dili and Viqueque, and attacks against UNTAET personnel along the borders — as detailed by Mr. Annabi — reinforce the need for strong security measures. As well as enabling refugees to return home safely, the security environment should enable the resumption of humanitarian efforts and ensure that elections can be prepared and carried out in a calm and safe manner. I was pleased to hear from Mr. Annabi that lessons are being drawn from the recent incidents with a view to further action.

Finally, like others, I would have raised the tax issue and I am grateful to Mr. Annabi for his response, but I would echo your own remarks, Sir, concerning that issue.

Mr. Gokool (Mauritius): My delegation thanks Mr. Annabi for the comprehensive briefing on the situation in East Timor. We are pleased to note the fruitful meeting between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the East Timor Transitional Administration in Denpasar last January, where many important issues were discussed and agreement was reached on those issues.

We believe that for any democratic process to succeed, it must first of all adopt an inclusive approach to accommodate the entire population of the country without discrimination. We believe that the returnees should be treated as an integral element of the broader process of reconciliation in the independent East Timor. We hope that in the short time-frame now available to UNTAET this issue will be given the consideration that it deserves. We appreciate the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the other organizations in accelerating the return of refugees to their homeland. We are happy to learn that the International Organization for Migration is taking positive steps to repatriate those refugees who are registered to return. We look forward to a quick and voluntary return of refugees from West Timor before June, the date set for registration.

We deplore the tragic incident and rioting after the death, on 12 March, of a teenager in Makadiki. We believe that an effective process of community reconciliation is the sine qua non for the successful establishment of national protection.

My delegation appreciates the decision of the House of Representatives to set up two ad hoc courts to try gross human rights violations. We hope that the presidential decree that is needed for their actual establishment will not be retarded. We strongly support the application of the "relief to development continuum", a framework strategy that addresses the humanitarian needs and aims to achieve progressive changes towards establishing a sustainable and independent East Timor. We hope that international as well as bilateral donors will generously contribute to the implementation of the programme.

We hope that the formal request formulated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the transfer to East Timor of Jacobus Bere — suspected of killing New Zealand peacekeeper Leonard William Manning on 24 July 2000 — made under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Legal, Judicial and Human Rights Related Matters signed on 6 April 2000 between the Government of Indonesia and UNTAET, will be acceded to.

Finally, my delegation would like to ask only two questions of Mr. Annabi. The first is whether the recruitment and training of East Timorese electoral officers is being carried out so as to make the election fair and transparent. Secondly, what are the facilities put in place for refugees who are returning to East Timor?

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having made this meeting rather livelier than those in the past. There is still a great deal to be done, but you have definitely set the course.

I would like to thank Hédi Annabi for the information on the positive developments. It seems that things are going slowly but well for the setting up of the structures of a State that will be able to stand on its own feet. France will contribute its share, in particular in providing the training for the diplomats that the young State will need.

The next important stage is the election of the 88 members of the Constituent Assembly on 30 August. In that connection, I wish to associate myself with the questions that have been asked concerning the situation of the refugees who are still in West Timor. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 80,000 to 100,000 of them. Out of a total East Timorese population estimated at 800,000, one can easily see that the inclusion or not of this number of people will make a difference in the election results.

I would like to ask Mr. Annabi, in this connection, whether the Secretariat feels it would be possible to accelerate the return of these refugees in such a manner as to enable them to participate in the electoral process. If, as seems probable, all the refugees cannot be resettled before the elections are held, perhaps, as the Indonesian Government has proposed, we might consider a return of United Nations personnel to West Timor, with sufficient security conditions. In that scenario, what conditions have yet to be met?

Finally, I have a question about the possibility of resorting to a procedure that Mr. Annabi is very familiar with and that we used in Cambodia. In Cambodia, if I remember correctly, we used an on-site registration procedure for refugees who had not yet been able to return so that they could participate in what was also a historic election at that time. So, these are my questions concerning the refugees presently in West Timor.

My second line of questioning relates to the future, the post-election period. Obviously, everyone will have to remain there until 30 August, but preparing for the future is a matter of planning. As Sir Jeremy Greenstock has told us, there will be a report on 30 April, and Security Council resolution 1338 (2001) asks the Secretariat to look beyond the date of 30 August as regards the size, structure and manner of deployment of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

I would like to underscore how important it seems to us that the Secretariat should start now with preparation for the post-election period, so that after the Constituent Assembly is elected the international presence can be scaled down when that is possible, in a phased and gradual manner. On the one hand, it is clear that we already have the police sector, and a United Nations presence will be necessary for a relatively long period. The recent incidents bear witness to this fact. On the other hand — and I would like to hear what Mr. Annabi has to say in this connection — when it comes to the armed forces I think that we could start planning for a gradual withdrawal after the Constituent Assembly is elected and as the date of independence draws near. I think that it is very important that the beneficial presence of the United Nations not gradually become some sort of occupying force. I took note of what Mr. Annabi said a moment ago; it is easy to perceive the path from being helpful to being frustrating, a gradual slipping which could be a concern for the whole international presence.

As my final point, going beyond the United Nations force, beyond UNTAET, I would like to talk about the participation of the entire international community in the effort that will be required to help the Timorese. We had an interesting meeting here in this room with the participation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I think that following the useful exercise in Dili on 29 March, it is in this spirit that we have to prepare for the Canberra meeting on 14 and 15 June, making sure that the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the IMF and the UNDP not only attend, but also fully carry out their share of the effort now and in the months and years to come. I would be happy to hear what Mr. Annabi has to say in this connection.

The President: Following Ambassador Wang, I will turn back to Mr. Annabi, whom I encourage to give quite brief answers to some of the points that have come up, because some of the more substantive questions will need to be dealt with with full consideration by the Secretariat in the Secretary-General's report.

Mr. Wang Donghua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I regret that I was not personally able to hear the briefing given by Mr. Annabi. As usual, his briefing was highly informative.

Since the Council last considered a report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration Mission in East Timor (UNTAET), East Timor has achieved further progress in the attainment of independence in various aspects. In particular, we must point out that "Timorization" is being accelerated and that voter registration has begun. We appreciate the efforts made in this regard by all parties, including the people of East Timor and UNTAET.

The issue of refugees in West Timor continues to be an outstanding problem. Many delegations have stated this fact. We believe that with the gradual improvement in the security situation, international aid agencies should return to West Timor as soon as possible in order to help refugees in dire need and to accelerate their repatriation so that they may fully participate in the independence process in East Timor and be able to exercise the democratic rights to which they are entitled. China appreciates the efforts made by the Government of Indonesia to implement resolution 1319 (2000) and to facilitate the early return of international relief workers to West Timor. We hope that the United Nations and the Security Council will, in the light of current realities, seriously consider the request by the Government of Indonesia for the early deployment of a security assessment mission to the area.

To advance the independence process in East Timor and ensure that the country will gradually achieve self-reliance after independence, it is necessary that UNTAET further step up "Timorization" and ensure that more Timorese are involved in the power-transfer process, and that power is transferred to them in a proactive and steadfast manner. China hopes that in this regard the United Nations will respect and attentively heed the aspirations of the East Timorese people and that, on that basis, it will submit to the Council specific suggestions on the various aspects of the transfer of power.

Finally, I wish to brief the Council about some developments. As a friendly neighbour of East Timor, China has been helping East Timor to the best of its ability. A Chinese trade delegation recently visited East Timor and signed an agreement with UNTAET on economic and technical cooperation under which the Chinese Government is to provide new and non-gratis assistance to East Timor. In addition, China has delivered promised assistance to East Timor in the form of agricultural machinery, fishing gear, farm tools and agricultural chemicals. We will continue to help East Timor with training in agricultural techniques and in the training of civil servants.

The President: I turn again to the Assistant Secretary-General to respond to the questions asked so far.

Mr. Annabi: I will try to be brief, Mr. President, as you have encouraged me to defer some of the answers until the issuance of the reports of the Secretary-General. I want to point out in that regard that the Council has requested two reports. There will be a report at the end of April that will focus on a military and political assessment of the situation and on the implications of that assessment for the size, structure and deployment of the United Nations Transitional Administration Mission in East Timor (UNTAET). There will then be a second report, at the end of July, which will be more comprehensive and cover the whole issue of what the post-independence presence will look like. So I hope that Council members will be patient enough to wait until those reports are issued. If we have some of the answers before they are issued we will of course share them with the Council. But, as I indicated in my presentation, active work is taking place on the ground on all of these issues. We will feed the answers back to the Council as we identify them.

Very briefly, on the issue of property rights, the Cabinet has simply decided to defer consideration of claims on property rights until after independence. So that will not be taken up now.

On phase V and the reconsideration of the security status in West Timor, until at least recently it has been the view of the Security Coordinator that if he were to undertake an assessment he would probably come to the conclusion that phase V should be maintained, as there continue to be problems with the militia in the camps. In fact, an advance security team went to West Timor a month ago and was unable to visit the camps in the area of Betun, which, as the Council knows, is a militia stronghold. So it seems that until more is done to improve that situation, the feeling is that the assessment would not come to a positive

conclusion. But we will continue to discuss this with the Security Coordinator to see whether that can be reconsidered.

On the preparations for the elections and the issue of whether the refugees in the camps will be registered, the answer is, simply, no; they will not be registered. The regulation does not foresee that. In fact, the regulation deliberately foresees — and this was a decision taken by the National Council — that those who wish to vote have to return. It is actually hoped that this may induce some of the refugees to return if they wish to participate in the election and in the political life of the country.

On the whole issue of possible reductions in the level of military and police components after the elections, I think this will also be addressed in the upcoming report of the Secretary-General. But I must tell the Council quite frankly that, as it will have noted from my report today, while we have a very professional operation on the border with West Timor, there continue to be problems. I can assure the Council that we have a very professional operation on the border, led by the remarkable Brigadier Gillespie of Australia. They are doing a very professional job. I met with him in Suai. But there continue to be incidents, and it is likely that in the run-up to elections more incidents may occur, as it may be in the interest of some groups to try to destabilize the situation during that period. So there is a very, very strong feeling among our colleagues on the ground — and I do not think that we should second-guess them too much — that we should not tamper with the force levels, certainly not before the elections. Let us wait and see.

Hopefully, things will go very well and the level of security will be such that one will be able to think along those lines, namely, downsizing after the elections. We certainly would not want to maintain troops who are not needed. But I think we should defer that decision until we see what happens and until the elections are behind us.

A final point: I had the pleasure to meet briefly with the deputy minister of commerce of China while he was visiting there — we were there at the same time. Mr. Vieira de Mello was very pleased with the agreements that were signed. China, I understand, will also make an important contribution to assist in the construction of the future foreign ministry of East Timor; that is very much appreciated by the East Timorese.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): We too thank Mr. Annabi for his comprehensive briefing on the matter before the Council today. We reaffirm our full support for the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which has done outstanding work in implementing its mandate. As Mr. Annabi has said, the way to independence is now open. We believe that, at this very delicate stage and more than ever before, UNTAET needs the full support of the international community and of donors.

We applaud recent decisions taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. In that connection, my delegation earnestly hopes that the elections scheduled for this summer will be well organized, free, transparent and, above all, inclusive. We echo the comments made today by the representative of Ireland about women and by the representative of Tunisia about cooperation with Indonesia on security matters.

At this stage, many of my questions have already been asked and Mr. Annabi has already answered most of them. But, without being pessimistic, I would note that the timeframe for the elections is very short, as Mr. Annabi has told us. Could the date of the elections be flexible, to make it possible for all refugees to return and to participate in the electoral process?

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): You have asked us to dispense with formalities, Sir, so we will not congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. But we would like to say publicly what we have told you privately: that we strongly support your efforts to reform the working methods of the Council. The interactive meeting we are having today is, I think, a good development.

I want to apologize to my good friend Mr. Annabi for not having been present when he gave his briefing. But I have since then been briefed. And, speaking of the word "brief", I shall try to be brief, but I have a few substantive points to make.

When we look at East Timor, I guess that the traditional thing is to say that we can look at it as a glass half full or as a glass half empty. As optimists, we like to look at it as a glass half full. But this time around, as we look at the situation in East Timor, let us consider the possibility that we may be looking at a

glass that is half empty. In that regard, let us consider the possibility that 2001 is a very important and crucial year for East Timor, and that things may not go smoothly in the coming months. Several speakers have referred to the disturbing developments about which we have heard.

Of course, the most disturbing development is the resignation of Mr. Xanana Gusmão. I am a bit surprised that this is being taken relatively calmly. The political significance of this event is similar to that of a hypothetical event such as President Mandela resigning before the transition took place in South Africa. I know that Mr. Ramos-Horta has stepped in, and I know that Mr. Gusmão is continuing to play an active role in East Timor. But this is an indication of political troubles.

At the same time, there are reports of growing violence. I note from Mr. Annabi's remarks that there is a trend towards more and more frequent violence. We should also bear this in mind.

Given that context, I should like to make five points on this issue. The first point is that the exit strategy for East Timor may not necessarily be an easy one. We would like, of course, to hope that everything will go smoothly. But if it does not, we have to consider a possibly difficult exit strategy. Here I want to refer to remarks made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, at a recent conference in Singapore on the report (S/2000/809) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, which took place a few days ago, on 2 and 3 April. He said that the United Nations should apply the lessons learned from previous peacekeeping operations and ensure that the departure of a peace operation does not lead to a vacuum in the country in question or to a sense of abandonment. There is therefore a need for the United Nations and the international community to show flexibility and to continue to provide political support and resources both to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and directly to East Timor itself. We know that these issues will be addressed in the July report, but we have to reflect carefully on them in the coming months.

The second point I want to emphasize is that there is clearly a need for a strong United Nations presence in the coming months. Here, I was pleased to hear what Mr. Annabi just said: let us not tamper with force levels at this stage; let us wait and see what actually happens. Here, one important point that needs to be put on the record is that there is a distinction between the holding of elections and the achievement of independence. These are two different events. Let us not tie the reduction of force levels to the election date; it should be tied to the question of independence and what comes after independence.

The third point is that we obviously need to help the East Timorese more in terms of their preparations for the nationhood that is to come. I can say candidly — in line with your request for us to speak openly at these meetings, Sir — that when I met Mr. José Ramos-Horta privately I noted that the lesson of the past 40 years has been that, while achieving independence has been relatively easy, ensuring the success of that independence has always been a challenge. He acknowledged that point in private, and he acknowledged that a lot of work needs to be done. Perhaps, as the United Nations prepares for the future of East Timor, it should look at the big picture and at the full range of institutions and institutional frameworks that are needed for a society such as that of East Timor to succeed. It is good to get assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, but at the end of the day you have to put together a country almost from scratch. It is the big picture we need to look at. Here again, I was pleased at what Mr. José Ramos-Horta — until recently the foreign minister and now the President of the National Council — said, when he spoke about independence:

> "This could happen by the end of this year; or, if we see that some of the conditions that are essential for the foundation of independence are not there yet, we could very well postpone it until 2002."

I think we should listen to voices like that in making any decision on the timing of the transition and of independence. We have to look carefully at the overall state of East Timorese society and ask ourselves how ready they are to sail on their own.

The fourth point is that, in looking at the East Timor issue, we should not look at it in isolation. It has a regional context. It has an impact on the region — the region that Singapore belongs to, which is South-East Asia. We should take note of the fact that even though Indonesia is going through all sorts of difficulties, it is taking steps, within its limited resources, to demonstrate its commitment to resolving the refugee

problem in West Timor. We note that quite a few refugees have since gone back. Whatever happens in East Timor will have an impact on the region. One point I would like to emphasize is that, just as our colleagues in Europe worry about developments in the Balkans and have asked us to be sensitive to the regional dimension of many of those issues, we hope that our colleagues will take note of the fact that East Timor also has regional dimensions and that they too should be factored in. If you look overall at the quantity of resources that Asia takes from the United Nations system, it is, frankly speaking, relatively small. East Timor is probably the single major United Nations operation in the entire continent of Asia.

My fifth and final point — and an equally important point — is that Singapore will remain committed, within its means and where it can make a useful contribution, to supporting the United Nations and international efforts to help East Timor become a normal and productive member of the international community. A new development is that starting next month Singapore will be deploying, with the New Zealand composite battalion in the western sector, a reinforced battalion of up to 70 regular combat troops for a period of one year. The number 70 may be small for big countries, but for a small country like Singapore that is a significant number, and it indicates the level of commitment we have to helping East Timor achieve independence smoothly.

In conclusion, we look forward very much to the reports that are going to be issued by the Secretariat on the situation in East Timor, but as it does this, we hope it will bear in mind one of the most striking lines in the Brahimi report, which is an appeal to please not tell us, the Security Council, what you think we want to hear. Please tell us how you think the situation actually is one the ground. What is actually happening? How ready is East Timor for the various transitions taking place? How many resources will we need, and what will we need to do to ensure that, when history is finally written, the history books will say that the United Nations finally did a great job in its exit strategy from East Timor?

The President: I thank the representative of Singapore, particularly for the style of that intervention.

Mr. Ahsan (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for injecting quite a bit of novelty into our formal meetings here, not least because you have allowed questions from non-members through members. That is quite something, which we appreciate very much.

We would also like to thank Mr. Annabi for his comprehensive briefing upon his return from East Timor. We have, like many others, noted considerable progress in a number of areas, including the civil registration process, the training office of the East Timorese Defence Force and recruitment in public service.

We also share a number of points made by previous speakers and some of their concerns, but, nevertheless, I would like to make some brief points. To begin with, public service; we all know that this year is very important, and it has been mentioned around the table that public service will be one of the factors that will determine to a great extent the kind of transition we can expect in East Timor towards independence. We are therefore happy to note that a large percentage of civil servants have already been recruited to the East Timor Transitional Administration. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to encourage gender balance in this new public administration, reflected in the recruitment of about 2,000 women out of 8,000 officers recruited in this service. This is an encouraging sign. We would have liked to see the same balance in the Constituent Assembly, and it is a bit of a disappointment for us that the mandatory quota for women was not agreed.

The next point I want to mention is the refugee situation. This is still a very big concern for us, as the refugees continue in their plight in the camps in West Timor. We believe that we have to do something about it very quickly. We are encouraged by the meeting between the Secretary-General and the Indonesian Foreign Minister, and the security category re-rating is something which we would encourage the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to go forward with as soon as possible, because we believe that that is the only way to encourage and facilitate the large-scale and definitive return of the refugees from West Timor.

But, of course, we are very happy to learn that even in the absence of this, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration, with the

cooperation of Indonesian authorities and UNTAET, have been arranging returns in small groups.

We also share the concern raised by a number of delegations about the taxes imposed on international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We believe that in the situation that we find in East Timor, it is very important that the NGOs be allowed to work in the way they work everywhere in the world. That is why we would also request that the ongoing discussion be continued and a solution be found to this problem of taxes imposed on NGOs.

The next point is about the economic situation, in particular the employment situation. We would have liked to hear Mr. Annabi brief us on this. What is the current situation? What is the employment rate now? What new projects have been undertaken in the last few months to improve the rate of employment? We think the relationship between the employment situation and the civil disturbances is quite clear, and we have to address that problem as best we can.

To conclude, I would also like to ask the Secretariat to brief us in due course on the second round of Timorese talks, which is perhaps now taking place with Australia in Melbourne. Some of the points, as you mentioned, Mr. President, can also be covered in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I associate myself with the words of gratitude addressed to Assistant Secretary-General Hédi Annabi for his briefing.

The Security Council's interest in the situation in East Timor is shown by the fact that 14 Council members have spoken at today's interim discussion, including the Russian delegation. A number of them have gone into detail about their approaches to and evaluations of a broad spectrum of the questions related to that territory. However, it is perfectly natural that the main topic of virtually all statements was the decision taken by the National Council regarding the date of the Constituent Assembly elections. We hope that the basis of this crucial step was not merely the symbolic force of the date, since 30 August will live for ever in the history of the East Timorese people as a landmark date, but also a realistic assessment of the situation in the territory.

As members know, after the referendum that took place in August 1999, life in East Timor had to begin from scratch. Since then an enormous amount of work has been done, and the Council has repeatedly noted that the territory is successfully moving towards independence. On the other hand, it is clear that the degree of preparation for holding the elections should be assessed in mid-summer, in order to avoid any unpleasant surprises. We hope that the East Timorese, in cooperation with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), will successfully carry out the tasks before them. That is my first point.

Secondly, we believe that, as part of the preparatory work for the elections, the successful conduct of national and civil registration will be very important for the ultimate success of the elections.

Thirdly, we think it is necessary — and other members of the Council have made this point — to pay attention to the recent incidents involving the use of force, including against international personnel. Mr. Annabi has gone into some detail about the reasons for these incidents and the measures that UNTAET intends to take to avoid their recurrence in the future. We think this is particularly important during this critical time we are going through.

Fourthly, we also note that recently there have been more returns of East Timorese refugees from the West Timor camps. However, we agree with previous speakers that the problem regarding the fate of 100,000 refugees in West Timor still requires close scrutiny. Of course, this problem must be resolved by UNTAET and the Government of Indonesia, working in close cooperation.

In conclusion, we are pleased with the successful process of this so-called Timorization, not only in the context of the training of nationals, but most importantly because East Timorese are being mainstreamed more and more into the territory's administration. We are convinced that this movement will be the most important contribution to preparing for the upcoming elections.

The President: I will now make a statement in my national capacity, before turning again to Mr. Annabi.

The United Kingdom's views are very much in consonance with what has been said around this table, and also with European Union policy, which is well

known and which will be further expressed when we have an open debate.

I think we have had an extremely useful briefing and a very interesting visit from the Assistant Secretary-General. I note his quite optimistic assessment that significant progress towards independence is being made on most, if not all, fronts. I think that this is one of the potential success stories of the United Nations, and we must keep it going that way.

The elections are extremely important. At this stage, we are happy about the date of 30 August. But it is very important that any refugees wishing to return from West Timor should be allowed to do so by 20 June so that they can register if necessary. That is an important milestone on the way to elections. In that context, we are grateful for the announcement by the Government of Indonesia that the registration of refugees in West Timor will take place on 1 May, but this should be preceded — and I hope that this will get back to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) — by a comprehensive information campaign in the camps so that they know what is going on.

We are also encouraged by the initiative of General da Costa to invite representatives from UNTAET, the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to join him on a visit to the camps. But before any return to West Timor by the international community can be contemplated, it is essential that the Indonesian Government make further serious efforts to improve security.

We welcome the progress being made by both Indonesia and UNTAET in bringing to account those responsible for crimes in East Timor, and we welcome the decision taken by the Indonesian Parliament on 21 March to set in place arrangements for the establishment of an ad hoc court for such trials. We hope that that will be pursued as a matter of urgency and that the question of extradition from Indonesia of suspects in the crimes that we have been talking about is also pursued, and not dropped.

After independence, East Timor will require extensive international support, and a lot of us have referred to that in this discussion. Comprehensive planning for that from an early stage, with the full participation of United Nations agencies, and drawing on expertise both in the field and in New York, will be essential for a successful transition to the post-independence phase. We particularly look forward to the Secretary-General's report on that aspect, to be issued in the summer. But I would like to ask Mr. Annabi whether progress is being made towards establishing a proper, integrated mission task force for that coordinated effort along the lines of the Brahimi recommendations. We regard the Secretary-General as being in a position to do that if he so decides, and we would like him to move forward on that.

I am conscious that the one question that the Assistant Secretary-General perhaps missed was about information on women held in East Timor and West Timor. There is actually some concern that, because there are no agencies present on the ground, we are not getting information about women being held and abused in West Timor, and we would like UNTAET and others to follow that up.

It goes without saying that the United Kingdom will continue to support very strongly UNTAET's efforts, and we wish nationally to pay tribute to UNTAET for what is being done, and to Sergio Vieira de Mello for his leadership.

The news about Xanana Gusmão's resignation is of some concern — I agree with Ambassador Mahbubani about this. We understand and respect his decision to stand down. But in our view, it will be very important for him to continue his valuable contribution to national affairs in these early stages as we into East Timorese independence, and we hope that that contribution is not going to be lost to us.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I come back to Mr. Annabi to take up any final points. If members of the Council wish to make any brief comments or add a question or two at the end, that will be possible. Then I shall sum up.

Mr. Annabi: First, I think there were one or two questions that I missed last time I took the floor. One related to the efforts made to try to encourage members of the diaspora to come back. Efforts are being made. Consideration is being given by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the East Timor Transitional Administration to perhaps encourage that return by providing subsidies to those who might be interested in returning, at least for

the short term. One of the problems, of course, is that the level of salaries that members of the diaspora get is way above what they would get in East Timor. As the Council knows, the current salary scale in East Timor has seven levels, with monthly salaries going from $85 at the first level to $361 at the seventh. That is what has been deemed, at least for the time being, as reasonable and sustainable in the current conditions of the economy of East Timor. So consideration is being given to the possibility of encouraging members of the diaspora to return and to contribute to the Transitional Administration by giving them subsidies — at least for the short term. But in the long run it will be a difficult problem, as we have seen in other situations, in Cambodia and elsewhere.

There was also a question — I think from our colleague from Colombia on behalf of Brazil — which related to the kind of assistance that may be required for the preparation of the elections. Of course, the participation of international personnel will be financed by the assessed budget. But there is a request for $3.5 million to finance a United Nations Development Programme project which is intended to help support voter education, capacity-building and the work of the national monitors. Incidentally, the organization of the whole electoral process is being approached very much from the capacity-building angle, so that, hopefully, in the process of the elections, an East Timorese capacity will be developed so that they can run future elections. They will be involved and trained as much as possible so that that capacity is developed.

Can the elections be postponed until all the refugees are back? I am afraid the answer is no. That is not the wish of the Timorese, and the electoral regulation adopted with their support foresees that the elections will be held on 30 August, unless there are such delays that it becomes technically impossible by that date to hold elections that are acceptable by international standards. But otherwise, they will take place, hopefully by 30 August.

With regard to the exit strategy after that, hopefully the Constituent Assembly will meet by 15 December and, hopefully, within 90 days it will agree on a constitution that brings us to 15 December, which means that previous talk about a possible independence date by the end of this year is somewhat overtaken by these practical considerations. I think our colleagues on the ground and their Timorese counterparts are looking more and more at a date for independence that would be in the first quarter of next year. After that, obviously, as Ambassador Greenstock has stressed — and we fully share that assessment — there will be a need for considerable assistance if we are not to jeopardize the considerable investment that has been made by the international community to create a sustainable Timorese administration.

I wish to make a clarification on a point made by Ambassador Mahbubani. Mr. Ramos-Horta is not the Chairman of the National Council. He has been appointed by Sergio Vieira de Mello as a member of the National Council to replace Xanana Gusmão. The election of the Chairman belongs to the National Council and that election is expected to take place either this week or next.

The economic situation and the level of unemployment obviously remain a concern. I think that the level of unemployment is still around 80 per cent. The economic situation is compounded to some extent by the fact that a lot of people have left the rural areas and districts to gather in Dili or in other cities, which exacerbates the difficulties. East Timor is traditionally very much a rural territory and the Asian Development Bank, with the support of Mari Alkatari, the Minister for Economic Affairs in the Cabinet, has a project to encourage return to the rural areas by farmers so that they can take up farming activities again.

The World Bank is also pursuing a number of projects. The level of actual disbursement by the World Bank has reached $30 million and a number of other projects, which I do not have at my fingertips right now, are coming on-stream. Efforts will continue to be made, but this is going to be a challenge in the medium and long term. Let us remember that everything was destroyed and we are starting from an extremely weak base. Efforts by the international community to provide economic and financial assistance to East Timor will need to continue well beyond independence, even if there are prospects after 2004 for revenues from the resources in the Timor Gap.

Since I am on the Timor Gap, I wish to confirm that negotiations are indeed taking place right now. Once we have a report on the outcome of those discussions, we will share it with the Security Council.

On the planning for post-independence, as I indicated, a working group has been established by Sergio Vieira de Mello on the ground that is looking in great detail, with the participation of other United

Nations agencies and the financial institutions, at the level of assistance that will be required to the administration after independence. Our colleagues in the military and police component are also looking at what will be required as part of this exercise on the ground. We here, as I said, are looking at the establishment of an integrated mission task force. We need to identify the right people for that and we will devise a system to enable our team here and the team that is working on the ground to interact. In fact, Sergio Vieira de Mello has requested us to try and send some planners or some of the members of that task force so that they can provide assistance to the work that is taking place on the ground.

The detailed planning can take place only on the ground, but what we see as an important role for the integrated task force here is the discussion of what we might call the "macro picture" — in other words, who will do what after independence and to what extent the other agencies of the system and the international financial institutions can pick up some of the activities, even if some of them are already telling us that, when it comes to providing the actual line managers who would continue to be required in the Timorese administration, they may have difficulties in that area, since they rely on voluntary contributions that, for some, are not forthcoming, at least at this point.

The President: I did refer to Ireland's question about the abuse of women. Can you say a word about that?

Mr. Annabi: I must confess that I do not have detailed information on that, but we will try to get it and get back to the Council at an appropriate opportunity. What I can say is that it is striking to hear from people in East Timor, especially from Timorese women, that domestic violence is at a fairly high level in East Timor. It is also one of the main concerns of our colleagues in the Department of Justice and of their Timorese counterparts. This is a serious problem which will need to be addressed and to which some efforts will need to be devoted.

The President: On that point, perhaps one of the Secretary-General's reports could cover what is being done to address that question, but I also want to make the point on behalf of the Council — and this is a public meeting — that, in West Timor, there are stories of continued abuse of women. It is very important that the Government of Indonesia, amongst others — and it has the responsibility here — should take these cases very seriously. They are happening on its watch in its territory.

I am very grateful to the Assistant Secretary-General for the frankness and comprehensiveness with which he has gone into detail on our questions and interests this morning. I think that has been very useful.

If no member wishes to make any final point, let me just sum up so that the Secretariat and non-members of the Council can be clear on what the Council is expecting on this issue over the next few weeks. I think that this morning's discussion has got into a lot of extremely useful detail about our concerns and I hope that the style of the meeting has added to that.

I want the Assistant Secretary-General to make it clear to the leadership of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) how impressed the Council is by their efforts and how much encouragement we give them to continue in quite difficult circumstances. We also want to focus, however, on what the Council can do over the coming weeks and months to support UNTAET and we therefore want the Secretary-General's reports to let the Council know what recommendations the Secretary-General may have for further action by the Council in encouraging the international community to support the move to independence by East Timor.

I think we have focused on a number of particular points that should be regarded as priorities for the reports and debates coming up. First of all, of course, there is the overall political context within East Timor and with its nearest neighbour, and in the regional context.

Secondly, there is the capacity-building that is necessary in East Timorese institutions in preparation for independence. That should include the potential for wider help from the international community, not just from the Council or the family of United Nations institutions.

Thirdly, there is the need for accelerated refugee return from West Timor and care of refugees, both in East and West Timor. Fourthly, there are the arrangements for the 30 August elections and the timetable of preparations for them. There is still a lot to do to make sure that they are held fairly with maximum participation of those who can and should qualify.

Fifthly, there is the issue of security. We regard it as essential, if possible, to snuff out the continuing threats to security and the economic and social situation in East Timor. Tunisia raised the question of a possible security assessment team visit, and we would like that to be considered. It would be relevant, I think, for the Secretary-General to make specific recommendations in respect of further security measures in the 30 April report.

Sixthly, there is the issue of the economy generally, but I welcome Bangladesh's raising of the point about employment. We have seen — or perhaps we have taken on board — the possible link between youth unemployment and violence from frustrated and bored gangs. Investment is clearly necessary — motivation for talented East Timorese to return from abroad if they can. This is an extremely important aspect for peace and security, as well as for economic development.

Finally, there is the exit strategy for UNTAET. The Assistant Secretary-General heard this morning of our strong interest in looking further ahead, regarding where this is going to come out, both for East Timor and for the United Nations presence there in the longer term. In that respect, we will be keenly interested to be kept abreast of the planning process. If it is sensitive, we will go into informal consultations on it, but planning ahead is of extreme interest to us.

I hope that those are useful pointers for the Secretariat for these reports that are coming up.

If there are no more speakers on this subject, I will close this agenda item. Of course, we will be following it up very closely.

Before adjourning the meeting, I have one or two notices from the Chair. This morning, since there was no breaking of the silence procedure over the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission, I have informed the Secretary-General that we approve his recommendation for the continuation of that mandate.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there was a discussion yesterday, and you encouraged me to speak to the Ugandan chargé in respect of incidents and violations of the ceasefire. I have not been able to get directly to Ambassador Morjane, but the Secretariat is quite clear that Ambassador Morjane and his team approve of the approach that we are taking. I will be proceeding with that recommendation from the Council.

As for forthcoming meetings, there is, unless there is an emergency, no meeting of the Council tomorrow. The next meeting is on 9 April, when we will be talking about our other extraordinary devolved administration, that in Kosovo. I intend, unless members of the Council want me to stop, to have this kind of discussion about Kosovo. I think that it would be productive on that issue as well.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, will brief us on his recent visit. It will be open to participation by non-members of the Council. If delegations that have a direct interest in this matter wish to make short interventions, they should let me know in the normal way.

If there is any need for informal consultations over the next few days, before we have our next scheduled informal consultations — on Tuesday, on Sierra Leone and the region — I shall schedule them at short notice.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.